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CALIFORNIA

ANNUAL FARM LABOR REPORT

1952



STATE OF CALIFORNIA
Department of Employment
Farm Placement Service.

CALIFORNIA ANNUAL FARM LABOR REPORT, 1952

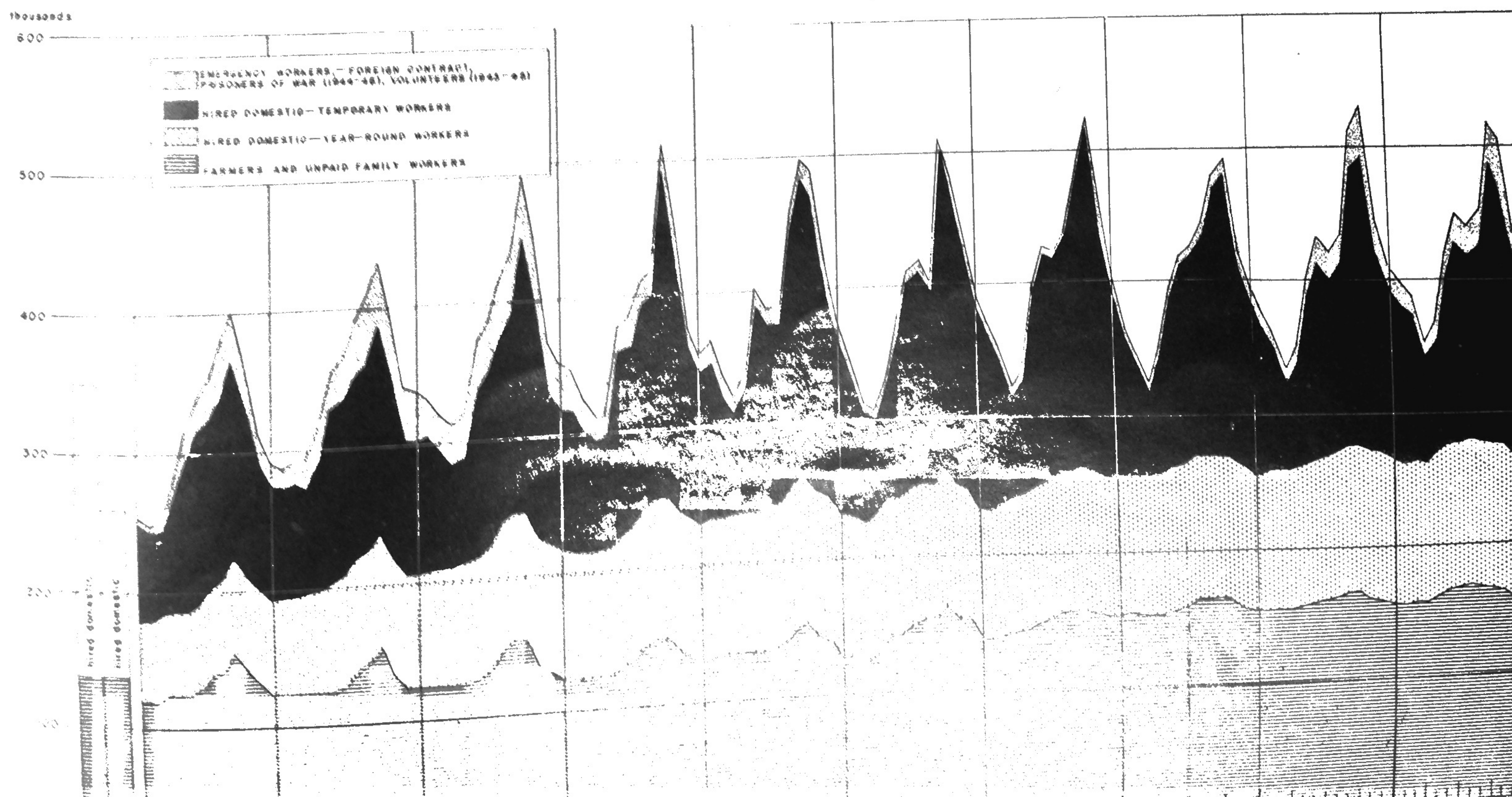
ESTIMATED NUMBER WORKING ON CALIFORNIA FARMS—BY MONTHS,* 1951 AND 1952 By Type of Worker

Year and month	Total workers	Farmers and unpaid family workers	Hired domestic farm workers				Foreign contract workers Mexican
			Total hired	Temporary		Year-round	
				Nonlocal	Local		
1951							
January	376,500	156,000	209,700	23,000	84,200	102,500	10,800
February	362,000	156,000	194,700	19,700	72,000	103,000	11,300
March	334,000	155,000	167,600	11,000	53,600	103,000	11,400
April	352,000	157,000	182,000	17,500	60,500	104,000	13,000
May	402,000	159,000	228,000	35,500	86,500	106,000	15,000
June	432,000	160,000	252,800	46,300	99,500	107,000	19,200
July	419,000	163,000	236,700	39,700	89,000	108,000	19,300
August	436,000	166,000	250,800	46,800	95,000	109,000	19,200
September	508,000	166,000	316,800	78,200	128,600	110,000	25,200
October	528,500	161,000	331,300	85,000	134,300	112,000	36,200
November	444,000	159,000	260,700	50,700	98,000	112,000	24,300
December	409,000	156,600	234,100	33,700	91,000	109,400	18,300
1952							
January	396,000	157,000	222,300	27,600	88,000	106,700	16,700
February	388,500	159,300	214,800	26,000	82,500	106,300	14,400
March	355,500	158,700	184,400	16,000	63,000	105,400	12,400
April	370,000	162,000	191,400	21,400	62,000	108,000	16,600
May	419,200	166,200	232,000	38,500	83,500	110,000	21,000
June	450,000	167,000	257,000	46,800	101,200	109,000	26,000
July	440,000	170,000	246,400	36,200	101,200	109,000	23,600
August	451,000	168,000	256,000	42,600	103,900	109,500	27,000
September	518,000	167,000	316,000	77,200	129,800	109,000	35,000
October	505,000	166,000	299,500	65,000	124,000	110,500	39,500
November	437,000	160,300	252,800	44,000	100,400	108,400	23,900
December	406,000	157,000	229,000	30,200	91,500	107,300	20,000

* Midmonth estimates.

WORKERS ON CALIFORNIA FARMS—1940, AND BY MONTH 1943-52

(1940 PER CENSUS 1943-1952 BASED ON FARM LABOR REPORTS OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT)



Mexican National Program

The Need. The farm labor shortages in 1951 carried over into the early months of 1952, with the consequent extension of contracts for several thousand Mexican Nationals. The pre-season 1952 estimates of need for foreign labor approximated the 1951 estimates. However, the enactment of Public Law 78 and the new international agreement in August, 1951, created a problem which caused later revisions in the needs for foreign workers in 1952.

The provision in Public Law 78 which penalized employers who used Wetbacks changed the plans of some employers. There had been no penalty provisions prior to August, and employers had not felt under compulsion to screen out these illegal workers from their crews. Public Law 78 changed employment practices to the extent that fewer employers would take a chance on hiring Mexican workers who could not produce evidence of citizenship.

Associations expanded their membership to take in new members, who questioned the legal status of workers formerly used. Individual requests as well as association requests for Mexican Nationals increased. The ultimate result was the maximum use of about 42,000 contract Mexican Nationals, October 1, 1952. This exceeded by nearly 6,000, the previous high during World War II.

The table on page 33 reflects the use of Mexican Nationals by month. The Nationals were used in 38 counties and by approximately 6,000 employers (excluding grower members of packing house associations when the packing house was the "member" of the farm labor procurement association). The workers were needed to help in the cultivation and harvest of most of the principal crops.

County farm placement advisory committees aided in the over-all determination of need in their respective communities. In several instances they withheld recommendation for approval of requests for certification, and in many cases dissuaded farmers from making requests for workers because the domestic labor supply was available for work either for the entire job or a major part of it. This action by these committees helped assure that the Mexican Nationals would not displace domestic workers.

Procurement. The processing of employer requests and the contracting of workers at El Centro was improved over the 1951 experience. The time lag between the actual request for workers and the approval to obtain them was shortened. There were fewer delays at the border due to changes in contract schedules.

The Employers. As indicated in preceding paragraphs, the employers' first thoughts were to obtaining an adequate supply of labor under Public Law 78. There was an increased awareness of the provisions of both the Law and the Individual Work Contract, whereby compliance problems were reduced. The management of many contracting associations did a commendable job in reducing compliance problems through close supervision of the use of Nationals by members, to make sure contract violations did not occur.

The Department of Employment Farm Placement staff, as well as local office staff, attended growers' meetings during the early part of the year. The entire Mexican National program was fully discussed, and as a result, the numbers of

workers requested seemed much more realistic than they might have been without these meetings. (See page 3, Minutes.)

The provision regarding the preference of employment for domestic workers, and the provision regarding the payment of prevailing wages caused the most confusion among small groups of growers. Some employers had been under the impression that once they contracted Mexican Nationals they had no responsibility toward domestic workers. When they were informed of their responsibility in this regard, they accepted referral of domestic workers when available.

The Bureau of Employment Security's proposed method of determining prevailing wages caused considerable controversy in the farm placement program. However, before the end of the year, a compromise procedure had been worked out, which was more applicable to California's complex crop and wage variations.

Housing for Mexican Nationals continues to be improved. Occasionally, an employer was found with substandard housing, and the men were immediately moved until the housing was brought up to standard. Some of the large associations continued to add to their already adequate camps, improving recreation and sleeping facilities. Some new camp construction by one large association was done during the year in anticipation of labor needs for 1953. The State Division of Housing and the farm placement representatives conducted joint inspections on many occasions, and this teamwork resulted in faster corrections to substandard housing than the housing inspectors had been able to obtain through their own inspections. This cooperative arrangement will be continued.

The United States Employment Service stationed compliance officers in local offices situated in the main towns serving employers of Mexican Nationals. The problem of defining their field of operation and responsibilities, as distinguished from those fields of compliance in which the state agency was generally responsible, caused some minor difficulties. Expiration of certifications, with work contracts also expiring, at times made it necessary for compliance officers to contact employers to determine if they intended to release workers. Employers were in most cases prompt with extension requests.

One complaint from the growers, for which there may be no solution, was the allowable charge for meals. Several of the large associations are subsidizing the feeding program by as much as 75 cents a day. The range of cost is between \$2.10 and \$2.50 a day, while charges are limited to \$1.75 a day.

The Workers. Most employers reported that the Mexican Nationals were very productive workers. The few complaints that did come from employers were the refusal of some of the workers to accept work in certain activities.

The principal complaint against the workers continues to be the skips and voluntary repatriations which occur without any penalty against the worker for breach of contract. This situation does not seem to be subject to any real solution. The worker is afforded a free choice of job and cannot be held when he does not want to remain on a job.

FARM PLACEMENT REPRESENTATIVES COMMENT ON MEXICAN NATIONAL PROGRAM

FINNEY (Imperial County)—"A Mexican National came into the local office one day and asked to see the manager who, he understood spoke Spanish. When I talked to him he explained that he wanted to send 1,000 pesos back to his wife in Mexico. We went to the post office and I secured money orders for \$120, the equivalent of 1,000 pesos. When I gave them to him to sign, he exclaimed, 'No, no, no! 1,000 pesos!' Suddenly he changed the word to 'dolors,' and we had to get more money orders. When I inquired, he stated that he had earned and saved the thousand dollars during eight months of employment as a contract farm worker. Another worker, of whom we know, saved enough to buy a Farmall Tractor before returning to Mexico, bought about 150 acres of land and today is a prosperous farmer."

BIRD (San Diego County)—"Our one contracting association was the San Diego Farmers Incorporated which had about 200 members. They have reported receiving good cooperation from the Reception Center and our agency, also that the quality of labor received in 1952 was considerably better than in 1951. The association has worked well with us in establishing more conservative estimates of need and better distribution. Fewer complaints have resulted and no grower who gave adequate advance notice was denied workers when he needed them. The association maintained greater flexibility in its work force than in 1951. All domestic farm workers were hired as soon as they presented themselves, and nearly all possessed some skill. Skips were somewhat higher than in 1951 but it is believed that most were just homesick boys who returned to Mexico without the formality of requesting voluntary repatriation. Contract worker earnings were from 10 to 20 percent higher than in 1951 because of better utilization of the work force. Those who stayed the full term of their contracts benefited considerably from their experience. The percentage of those who saved their money was higher than in previous years and many had as their objective the purchase of a farm in Mexico."

WARD (Supervisor, Orange, West Riverside, San Bernardino Counties)—"Each of our associations has done all in its power to recruit and hire all available domestic workers. The manager of one accepted appointment as a voluntary farm placement representative and each month makes bona fide placements for the Department."

SLACK (Orange County)—"Our contacts in conducting the Mexican National program often stimulate other employment service activity. Several instances come to mind of employers' requests for supervisory personnel who speak Spanish, and at least one request for a typist-clerk familiar with the Spanish language. These orders were filled."

KISTNER (San Bernardino County)—"Employers have commented that the Mexican National workers used during 1952 have been the most satisfactory group of workers that they have received during the entire foreign labor program. Their output has not been greater, but they have been steady conscientious workers. There has been less dissatisfaction among the workers, which has resulted in fewer skips. Apparently the selection process has been improved as practically all workers are farmers themselves or have been doing agricultural work in their native country. In one association it appeared that approximately 75 percent of their men were small farmers or land owners and they are here to make enough money to buy seed or to buy some livestock. Fifty percent or more of the earnings of workers of this association is sent home to Mexico for them. The associations have gone to considerable work and expense for recreation facilities to encourage the men to remain in camp during nonworking hours. They now have radio, television, and athletic equipment for baseball, basketball, boxing gloves, etc."

SPENCER (North Los Angeles County)—"The determination of need for Mexican Nationals in both the San Fernando Valley area and the Antelope Valley was made on a basis of preseason meetings with growers. Crops and

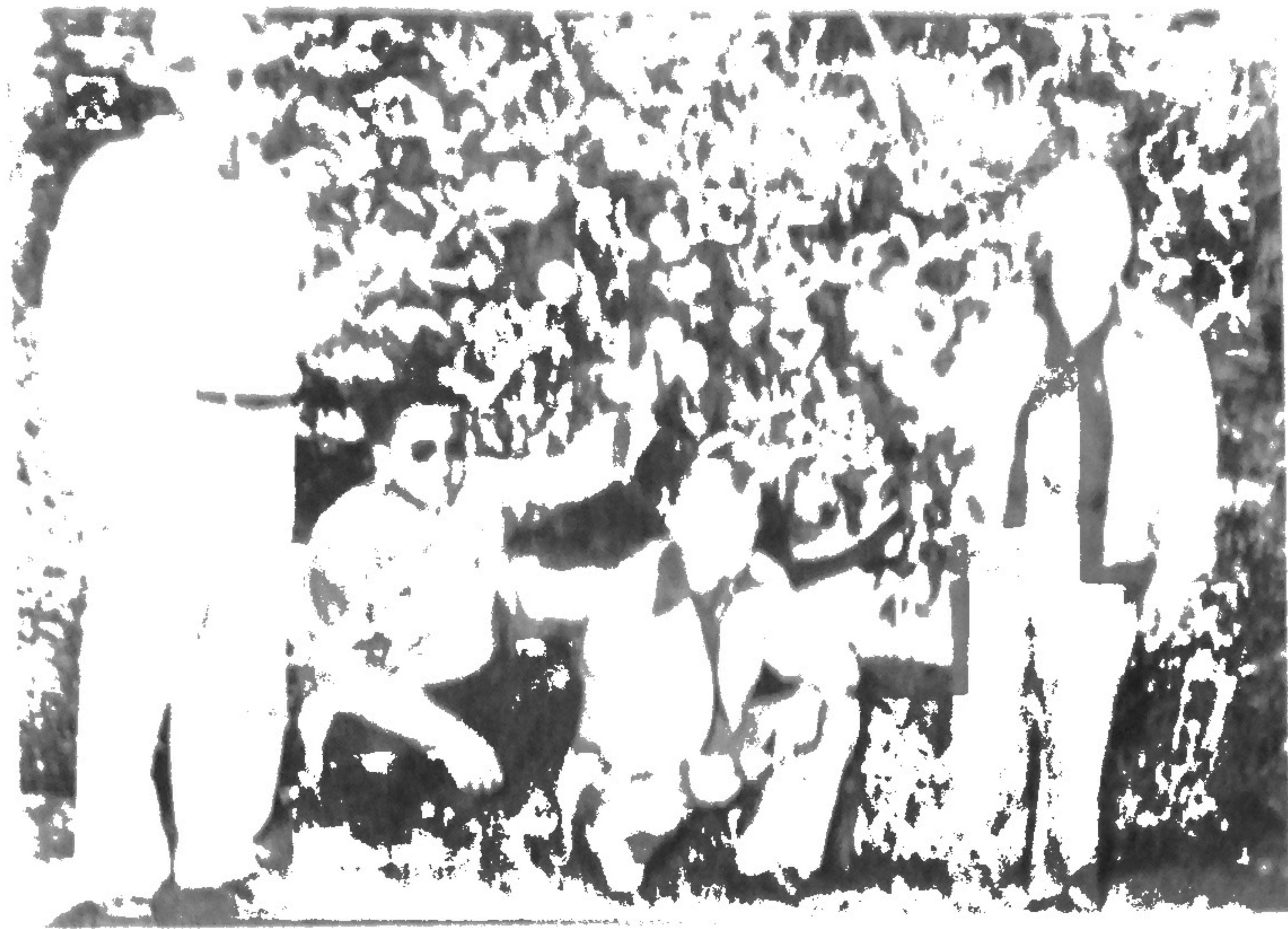
acres of association members were summarized and labor needs were estimated. Local workers were in shorter supply than anticipated but by shifting Mexican National crews the crops were harvested by the approximate numbers of Mexicans requested. The number for asparagus was somewhat high because the needs were reduced by thrip infestation, low market prices, and a number of local domestic workers who were available for day-haul. Mexicans not needed were transferred out. In no cases were local workers displaced. The Mexican Nationals were well satisfied as indicated by the fact that in one association there were no skips in the first two months. Few earned less than \$50 a week. Housing requirements and excessive cost of improvements in housing were the main problem in this valley. Four growers completely reconditioned their housing and a considerable amount of time was spent in inspecting the housing, helping growers get inspection and approval, and inspecting during use. In two cases I provided Mexican families for feeding large crews of Nationals. Two of our preseason meetings in this area were used for training meetings in use of Nationals and employer obligations. These meetings were instrumental in making for a good compliance record. Several growers have told me that one of our most valuable services is making growers conscious of the need for estimating labor requirements in advance and of giving advance thought to labor procurement. Our contacts with employers of Nationals continued to extend utilization of local office facilities. Every association member is required to maintain his individual order for workers in the local office. Several growers who used Mexican Nationals last year planted different crops this year and did not need Nationals. However, they used our services in recruiting required workers. Many Mexican users also placed additional orders for year-round help."

DOHERTY (Fresno County)—"We handled the many necessary documents for some 60 individual certifications, extensions, transfers, or replacements. However, fewer than 25 growers eventually used Nationals. The rest were supplied with domestic workers who became available. Numerous other growers were discouraged from requesting Mexicans after we had discussed with them their individual needs in relation to the expected labor supply."

WALLACE (El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento Counties)—"There was wide variation in grower satisfaction with the use of Mexican Nationals. Some reported a successful season with the workers while others found the program deficient in many ways. Satisfaction by the grower was usually related to his provision of a good camp, good food, a good crop, and good supervision; while dissatisfaction with the program was sometimes related to the grower's provision of a barely passable camp, passable food, a poor crop, or faulty supervision. Many Mexican users made extended efforts to recruit domestic farm help. Many growers requesting Mexicans were introduced to local contractors with crews, or were provided with day-haul help through the efforts of the local office."

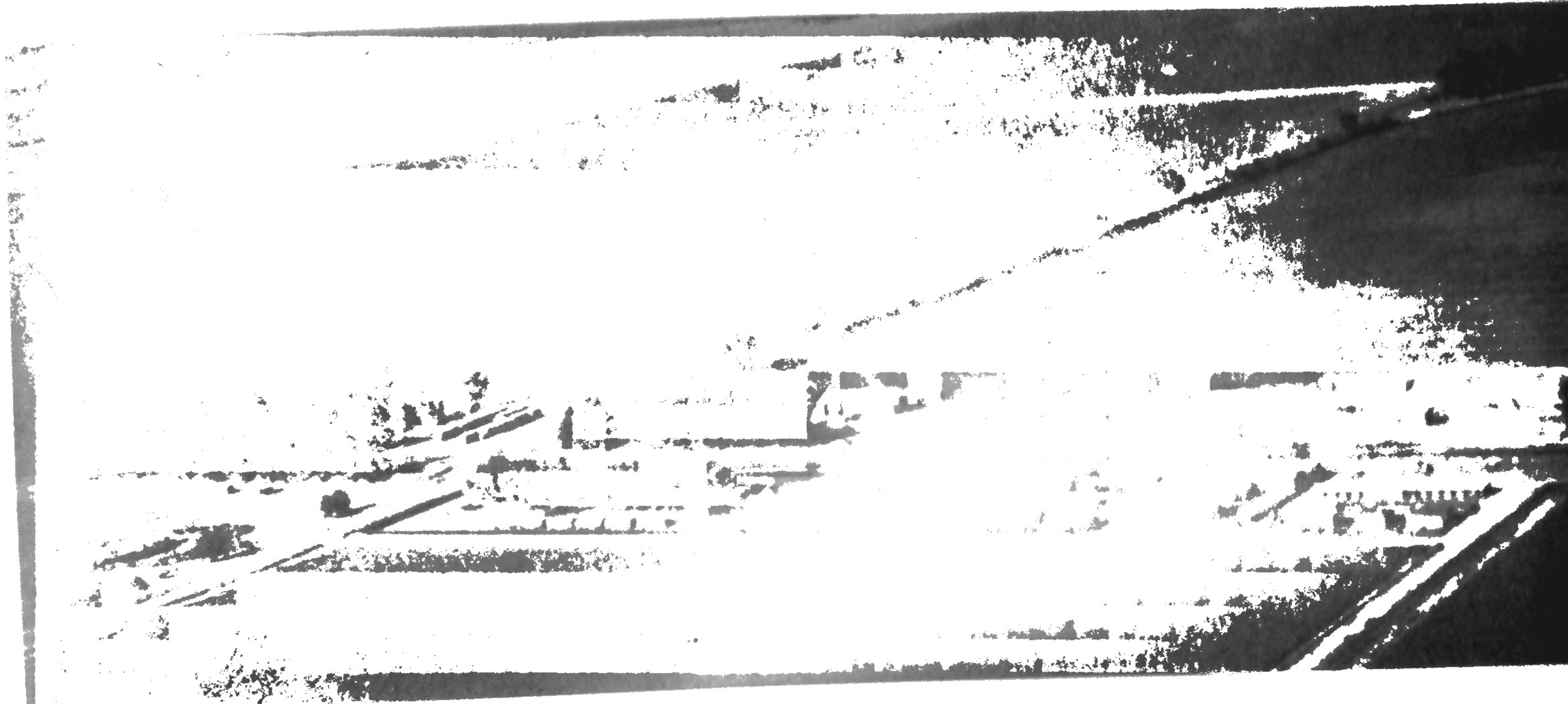
BAINBRIDGE (San Joaquin, East Contra Costa Counties)—"Our principal association is exceptionally well organized and well managed. The board of directors and manager seem to be dedicated to the conduct of an efficient and effectively clean Mexican National program. During the tomato harvest the association had orders from members for about 400 more Nationals than it actually furnished to them. An evaluation of needs made by the association manager and Farm Placement Representative, just prior to time of delivery, lead them to believe that these 400 men were not urgently needed. Contacts with the growers proved this to be the fact. The Mexicans were not procured and domestic workers met the need. This illustrates the manager's policy to examine closely each request and shave the numbers to a safe minimum. When doubt existed in his mind, he was not at all hesitant to call on Department personnel for information and advice."

(At right) One of the principal activities for which Mexican Nationals are needed is citrus picking. W. N. "Cap" Cunningham (right), Farm Placement Supervisor for Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo Counties, is also citrus coordinator for all areas and devotes considerable time to guidance of the Mexican National program for citrus growers. Next to him (right to left) are Harold Elliott, secretary-manager of the Citrus Labor Association of Santa Barbara County; Charles Offredia, assistant manager of the Johnson Fruit Company; and Ray Ault, superintendent of Dos Pueblos Ranch, where this picture was taken, and which produces oranges, lemons, livestock, and cut flowers.



(Center) Officials responsible for the conduct of the Mexican National program in the West include representatives of the Regional Offices of the Bureau of Employment Security in the Department of Labor, and representatives of the California Department of Employment Farm Placement Service. This picture was taken at a meeting of compliance officers in December, 1952.

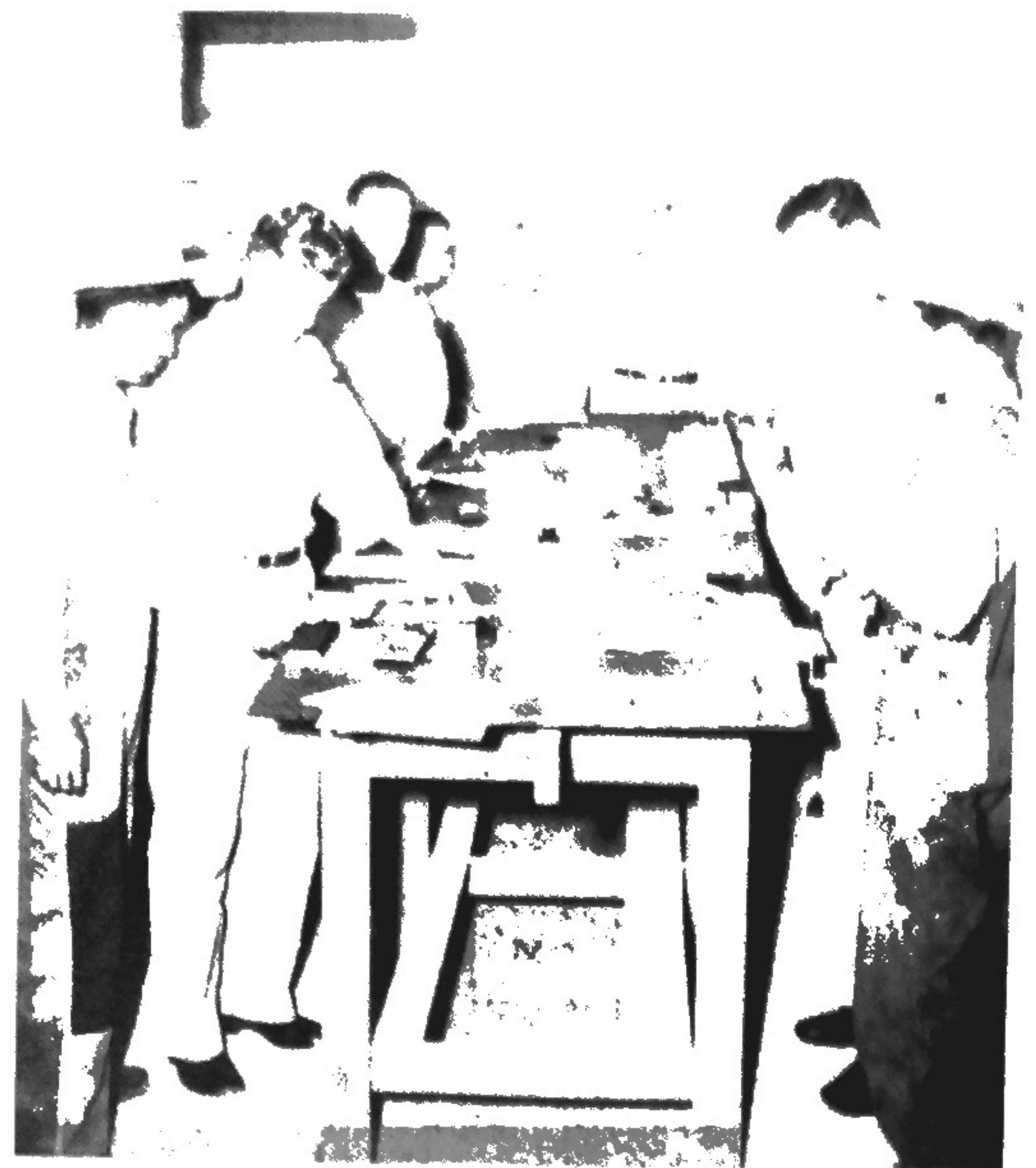
(Bottom) Air view of the El Centro Reception Center in Imperial County, at which Mexican Nationals are received from Mexico and are allocated for work in the Pacific Coast states. The Center consists of about five acres and some 16 buildings.





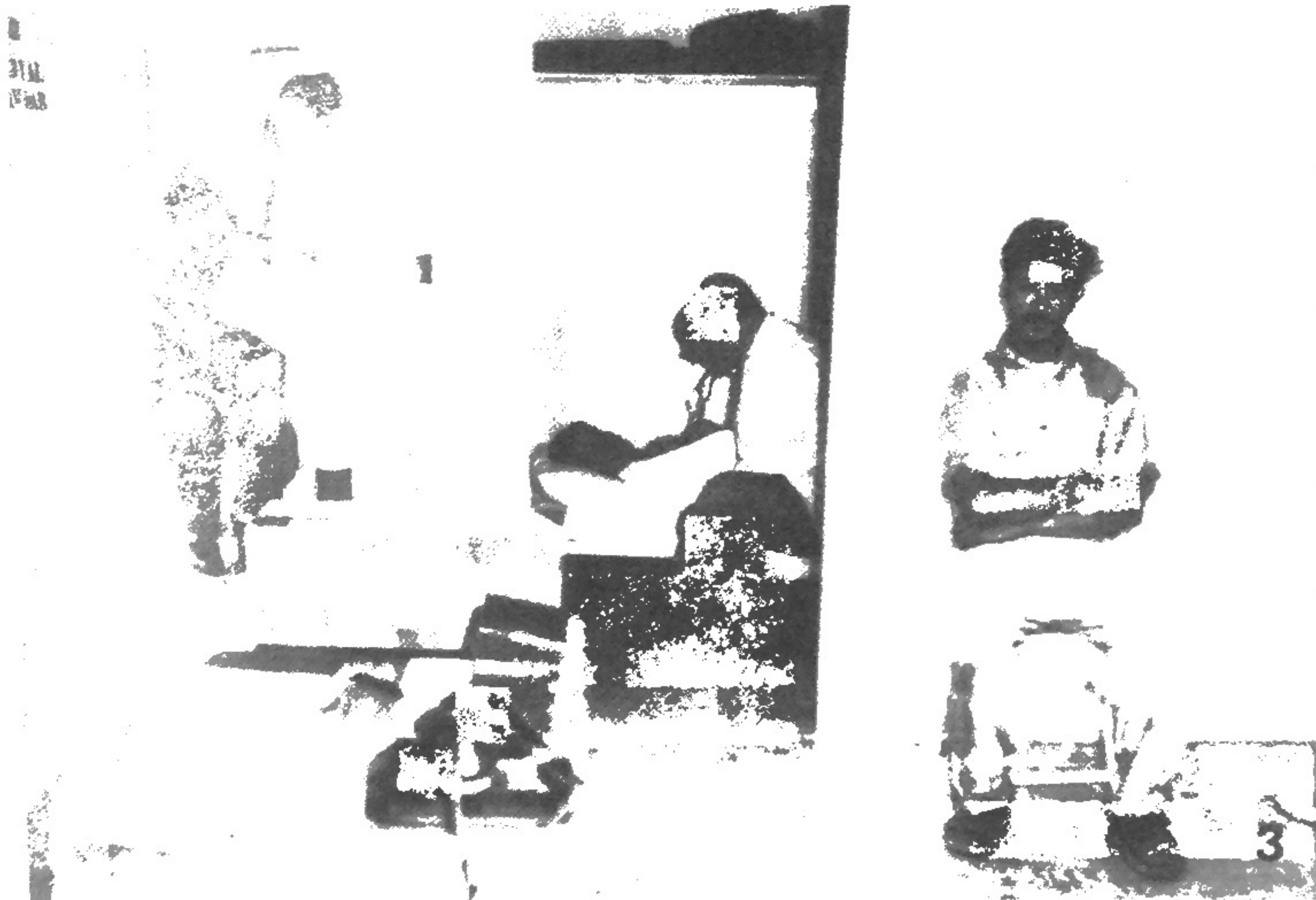
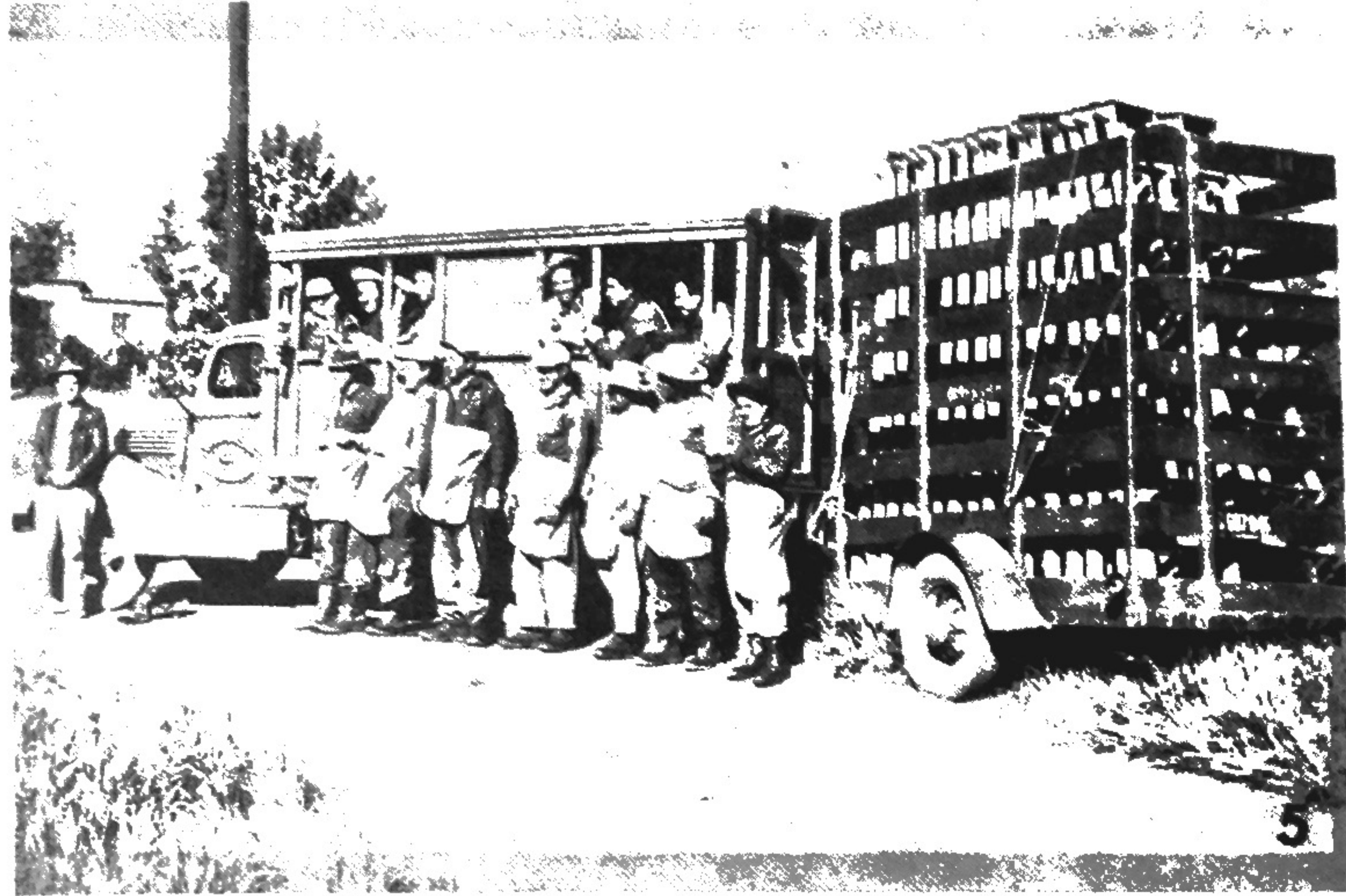
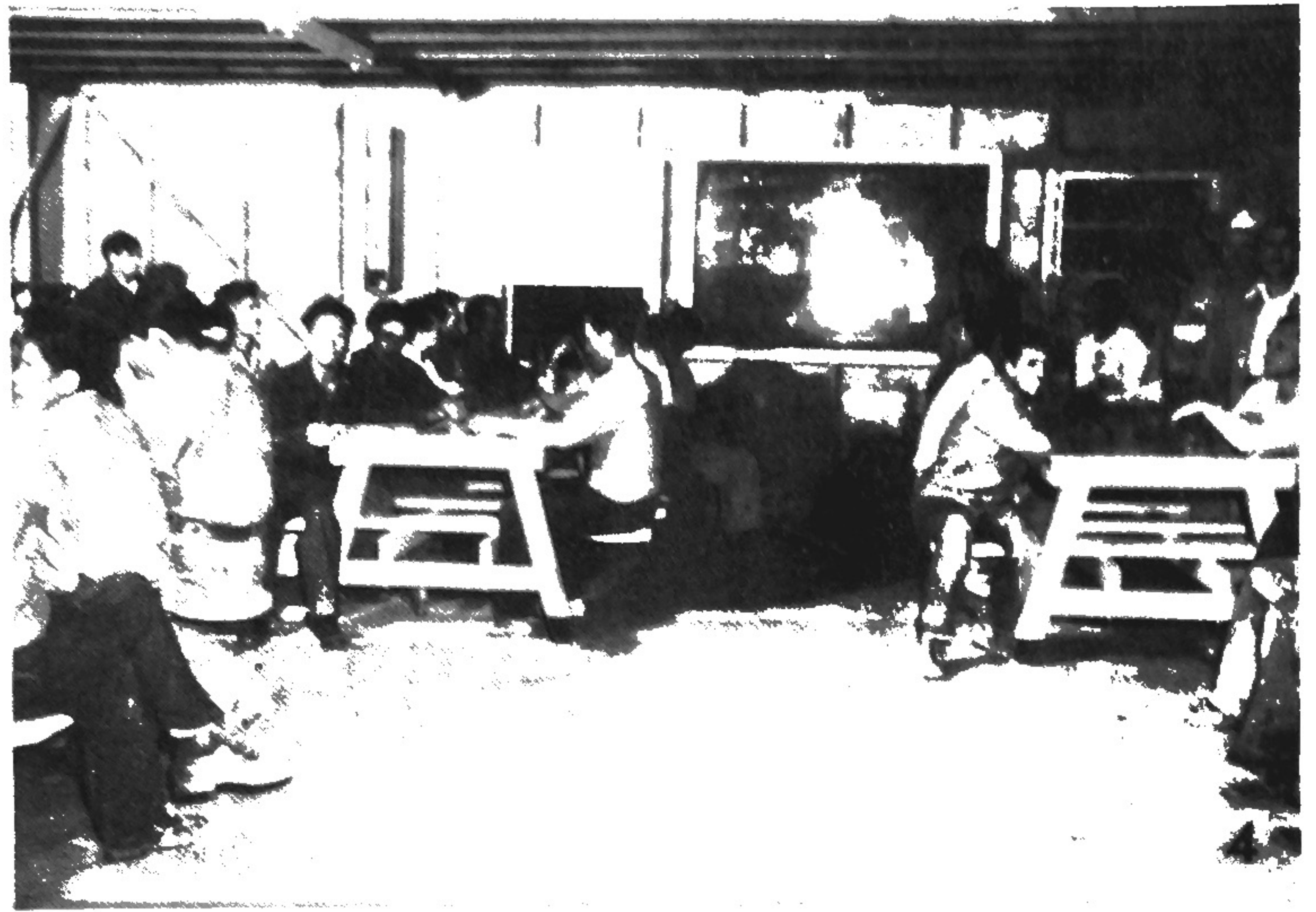
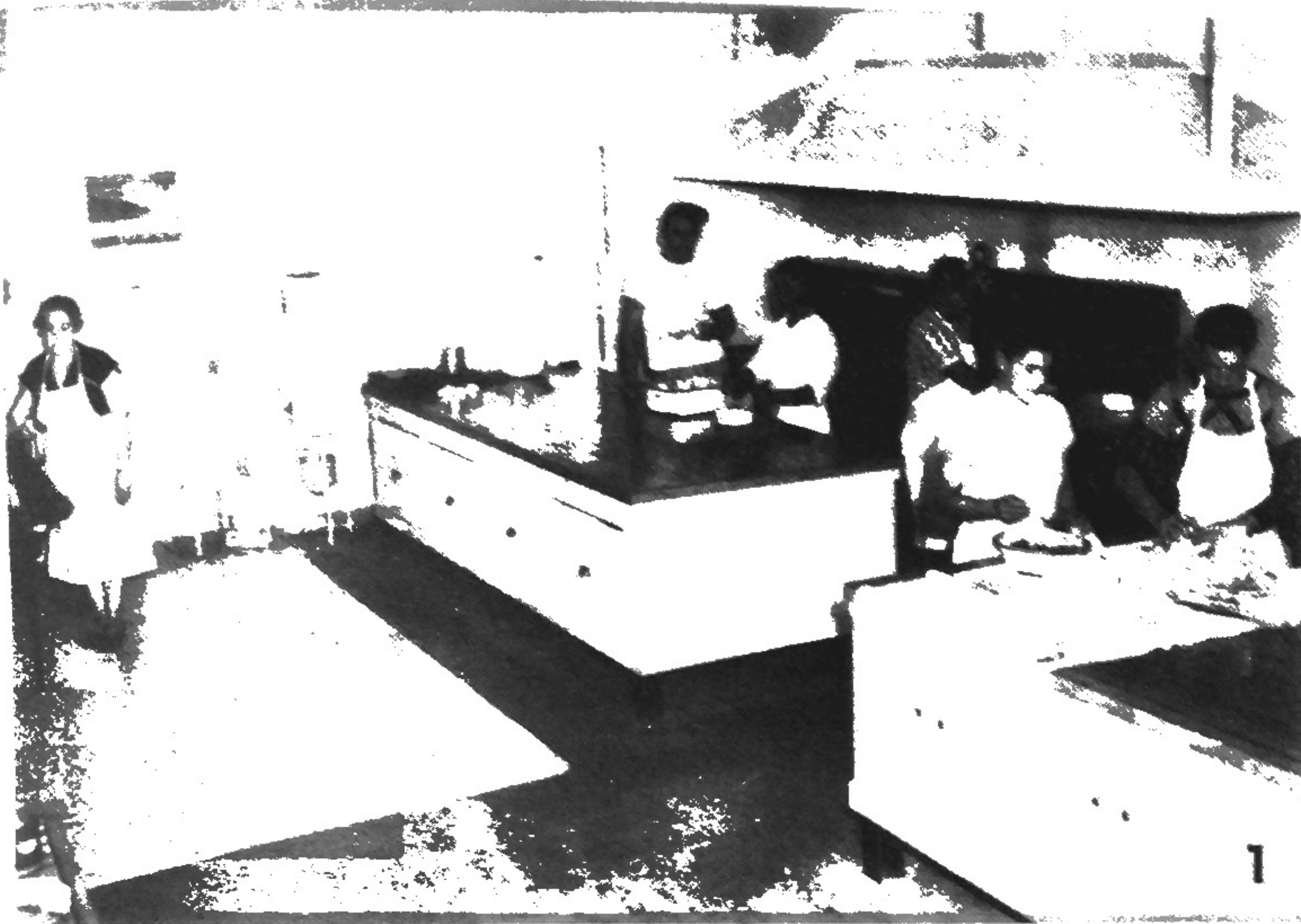
Mexican National Program—Continued

The following pictures show how Mexican Nationals enter the United States and are contracted for work on farms. (1) Workers who have just crossed the border are having their belongings inspected by the immigration inspector who is concerned primarily about finding fresh fruits which might bring in pests or disease. (2) Workers board busses for transportation to Reception Center about 10 miles away. (3) Workers line up at reception center for processing prior to contracting. (4) Processing includes chest X-rays and medical examinations including attention to present ailments. (5) Among other steps in processing is fingerprinting. (6) Worker is ready for contracting to employer. An interpreter is provided so that the employer may interview each worker and the worker can make inquiries about the job. Most of the pictures on these pages were taken during the filming of the Mexican National story, described on page 16.



Mexican National Program—Continued

Pictures on this page show something of the facilities provided the contract Mexican National workers in California. (1) Immaculate kitchen of the Piru Citrus Association in Ventura County. A Mexican diet is prepared by expert Mexican cooks. (2) Mealtime in a typical dining room—also at Piru. (3) Medical clinic at the Briggs-Lemon Association, Santa Paula, Ventura County. Nurse Estella Hill and Dr. Tullio Palboni keep regular hours at six Ventura County clinics maintained by the county citrus associations affiliated with the Continental Health Insurance Company. (4) Evening classes in the reading and writing of English and Spanish are conducted in three 2-hour evening sessions per week at the Piru Camp. Teachers from the local public schools donate time for this training, which is open to all camp residents. After preliminary study at these sessions, many Mexican Nationals attend regular adult education classes in the evening public school sessions. (5) This typical Mexican National crew of citrus pickers is being transported from a Santa Barbara County camp to a citrus grove of the Johnston Fruit Company. Note the trailer in which the workers' ladders are transported. (6) A group of lemon pickers, lunching in the grove, toast their tacos over the coals of a small fire.





Mexican National Program—Continued

LEGAL STATUS—This contract Mexican National cotton picker in the Imperial Valley proudly displays his identification showing that he is legally contracted for work in the United States. Border Patrol Inspector Curran, and many other inspectors of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, visit farms throughout California to apprehend and deport workers who may have entered the United States illegally.

CREW OF CONTRACT MEXICAN NATIONALS—This crew of 50 men picked canning tomatoes in Yolo County. Their earnings averaged more than \$100 a week. It is usual for many Mexicans to send regular sums of money home or to maintain savings accounts here. They have interesting plans for the use of their money. Some expect to buy cattle, land, farm equipment, or buy a small business with their savings. One was known to accumulate a good set of carpenter's tools, and another expected to buy a taxicab.



REPATRIATION—Upon completion of his individual work contract, the Mexican National is returned to the Reception Center at his American employer's expense and proceeds home to Mexico. This bus load of Mexicans have completed their contracts and are ready for repatriation at the Reception Center. It is common for them to be wearing newly purchased American clothing and carrying luggage filled with American purchases, even including small radios.

